



A Message From The Secretary

Nearly every day there is more information coming out about new cases of bird flu (H5N1) in individuals in other countries. Just this week, the death of a 15-year-old girl in Iraq marked the first case of bird flu in the Middle East. Human cases of bird flu infection have been reported in Cambodia, China, Indonesia,

Thailand, Vietnam and Turkey. With growing concern that bird flu could result in a pandemic (worldwide influenza outbreak), KDHE has been aggressively planning for that possibility and working closely with health partners.

On March 16, Kansas will host a Pandemic Flu Summit in Wichita with U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, Governor Sebelius and other officials to discuss what is being done and remains to be done regarding pandemic flu planning. Legislators, health care providers, business owners, school officials and many others will be asked to participate in this summit as we discuss plans for a pandemic many believe is inevitable.

The 2006 Legislative Session is off to a smooth start for KDHE as we have been able to introduce all of our proposed legislation and are now closely monitoring these measures along with other legislation that could impact the agency. KDHE introduced bills to:

- Require college students to receive meningitis vaccine or sign a waiver.
- Permit KDHE to share results from KBI background checks with child placing agencies for adoption purposes and assessment of prospective foster parents seeking licenses.
- Modify language related to payment of foods and formula for children with special needs.
- Modify language related to the state trauma registry including authorizing designation of facilities by level of trauma care capabilities.
- Modify existing environment compliance audit privilege statute to remove impediments to administering the program, including precluding the audit privilege law from being used as a shield in criminal investigations. (The audit privilege law allows companies that conduct an audit and find a problem to be exempt from criminal investigations if the problems are corrected.)
- Modify existing language to allow KDHE to implement the Clean Air Mercury and Regional Haze rules. The changes would provide the authority to develop a state implementation plan to provide for controls on air pollution sources that impact other states.
- Amend existing landfill siting laws to provide more comprehensive and scientifically-based criteria related to restrictions on landfills, specifically related to protecting valuable water resources by limiting locations for development.

The new KDHE Annual Report and Resource Guide is now available. It's the first time in several years KDHE has produced such a document and we are pleased to be able to provide an overview of our many valuable programs while also providing insight from staff regarding the goals of the agency. We believe this document will serve to better inform the public and legislators about our services and provide them with important contact information as well.

KDHE and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP) recently announced new fish consumption advisories for 2006. This is an annual process and serves as guidelines for the public to make informed choices about their health and diet. The advisories identify species of fish that should be eaten in limited quantities, or in some cases, avoided altogether because of contamination found in tested fish. The advisories include guidelines for mercury and PCBs in fish, perchlorate in fish and other aquatic life, and lead and cadmium in shellfish. For more details go to www.kdheks.gov.

KDHE is planning the second annual health disparities conference in April called "Healthy Practices, Healthy Kansas." It will be at the Maner Conference Center / Capitol Plaza Hotel in Topeka. The conference will provide public health professionals from across Kansas an opportunity to convene to share best practices and to learn about new strategies and resources to improve the health of diverse ethnic populations across our state. Find out more about the conference at www.minorityhealthks.org.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "J. Ad" or similar, written in a cursive style.